



INNOVATIVE M40 SOLAR PANEL NOISE REDUCTION CONCEPT GETS HIGHWAY AGENCY BACKING

The first UK scheme to reduce motorway noise and simultaneously generate energy has come a step closer, with the formation of a new partnership which will develop a business plan for implementing integrated solar noise barriers at communities along the M40.

The partnership of the Highways Agency (HA), Wycombe District Council (WDC) and M40 Chilterns Environmental Group (M40CEG) will take forward a winning proposal by M40 CEG in response to the Co-operative Group's Community Energy Challenge.'

M40CEG is dedicated to tackling issues of excessive noise pollution on a 20 mile section of the M40 while creating solar energy capacity through use of photovoltaic enabled noise barriers.

While integrated barriers have been successfully implemented in several countries, this is a UK first for the pioneering application of the technology. Plans include the formation of a co-operative enterprise that is expected to raise funds for the construction of the integrated barriers and then operate them for the benefit of local communities.

The work will be directed by a Project Board, whose members are Lord Parmoor, President of M40 CEG, Charles Meakings, Head of Democratic, Legal and Policy Services at WDC, and Ginny Clarke, chief highway engineer at the Highways Agency. The Board will work closely with the Centre for Sustainable Energy, which is providing support on behalf of The Co-operative.

Lord Parmoor said: "This exciting step towards improved quality of life for over 20,000 local people follows quickly on the selection of this proposal for an award by the Co-operative's Community Energy Challenge.

"We would like to express our appreciation for the financial backing and confidence placed in us by our Parish Councils, our District Councils for their championship and encouragement, and the Co-operative for their access to expertise and funding. We

look forward to working in partnership with the Council and the Agency to achieve the goal we set ourselves eight long years ago’.

Charles Meakings Head of Democratic, Legal and Policy Services at Wycombe District Council said: “Having encouraged M40 CEG from the outset, we are delighted to continue to work together on the next steps in this long campaign. We are excited and inspired at the opportunity to work with M40CEG on such an innovative and pioneering project and delighted to be part of a ground breaking partnership between our local communities, local and central government – it’s a living example of the ‘Big Society’ at work.”

Ginny Clarke commented: “The M40 Chiltern Environmental group have produced a concept that shows real promise and I’m looking forward to working in partnership with them and Wycombe District Council. We take our environmental responsibilities seriously at the Highways Agency, and a solution that combines noise mitigation with the production of green energy certainly merits a closer look. By working together in this way, I hope we can help to give this idea its best chance of success.”

Colin Baines, from The Co-operative Group, said: “As part of our campaign for a dramatic increase in community owned renewable energy, we are supporting several community groups across the country to set up and run their own projects. The intended result is an inspiring and replicable set of schemes that will help usher in a clean energy revolution. This is a particularly exciting project with enormous potential for replication and we congratulate all involved.”